DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 468 873 PS 030 686

AUTHOR Caparos, Jennifer; Cetera, Colleen; Ogden, Lynn; Rossett, Kathryn

TITLE Improving Students' Social Skills and Achievement through Cooperative Learning.

PUB DATE 2002-05-00

NOTE 95p.; Master of Arts Action Research Project, Saint Xavier University and Skylight Professional Development Field-Based Master's Program.

PUB TYPE Dissertations/Theses - Practicum Papers (043) -- Reports - Evaluative (142)

EDRS PRICE EDRS Price MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.

DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; Action Research; *Change Strategies; *Cooperative Learning; *Elementary School Students; *Interpersonal Competence; Observation; Peer Relationship; Primary Education; Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; *Student Improvement

IDENTIFIERS Teacher Journals

ABSTRACT

This action research project evaluated a program designed to increase the use of appropriate social skills and improve academic achievement. The targeted population was comprised of first through third graders in four separate communities located in northeast Illinois. Evidence of the problem included teacher observational checklists denoting levels of students' off-task behaviors, surveys completed by 87 teachers denoting cooperative learning strategies utilized in their classrooms, and surveys completed by 105 students reflecting their attitudes toward cooperative versus individual instruction. Analysis of probable cause data revealed that a lack of social skills contributed to off-task behaviors. Review of professional literature revealed that off-task behavior might also stem from poor social skills, as many students do not come to school with the same social values. A 12-week intervention consisted of a problem-solving approach incorporating lessons built on cooperative learning with increased emphasis on positive social skills to improve academic achievement. Post intervention data indicated academic growth, awareness of appropriate social skills, and a stronger sense of belonging. Working with nonfriends in teacher-selected groups presented less difficulty for targeted students following the intervention. There were clear reductions in student off-task behavior as noted in teacher observation checklists. Ten appendices include data collection instruments and sample instructional materials. (Contains 29 references.) (Author/KB)

Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made
from the original document.

Ps

ED 468 873

# IMPROVING STUDENTS' SOCIAL SKILLS AND ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH COOPERATIVE LEARNING

Jennifer Caparos
Colleen Cetera
Lynn Ogden
Kathryn Rossett

An Action Research Project Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the School of Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts in Teaching and Leadership.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
X This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
Jennifer Caparos
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
1

Saint Xavier University and Skylight Professional Development
Field-Based Masters Program
Chicago, Illinois
May, 2002

PS 030686



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

## ABSTRACT

This study describes a program designed to increase the use of appropriate social skills and improve academic achievement. The targeted population consists of lower elementary students in four separate communities, located in northeast Illinois. All four communities are part of one major metropolitan area and surrounding suburbs, and the status of family income ranges from low to upper levels. Evidence for the existence of the problem includes teacher observational checklists denoting levels of students' off-task behaviors, teacher surveys denoting cooperative learning strategies utilized in their classrooms, and student surveys reflecting their attitudes towards cooperative vs. individual instruction.

Analysis of probable cause data revealed a lack of social skills that contributed to off-task behaviors. Review of professional literature revealed that off-task behavior might also stem from poor social skills since many students do not come to school with the same social values.

A review of the solution strategies suggested by the professional literature, combined with an analysis of the settings of the problem, resulted in the selection of the problem solving approach incorporating lessons built on cooperative learning with increased emphasis on positive social skills to improve academic achievement.

Post intervention data indicated academic growth, awareness of appropriate social skills, and a stronger sense of belonging. More research is necessary to determine the long-term effects of cooperative learning in the classroom.

SIGNATURE PAGE

This project was approved by

Dr. Lucien A. Sennholtz
Advisor

Marguerite A. Vanderyoe
Advisor

Nancy Christy

Beverly Gulley
Dean, School of Education

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1 – PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT ..... 1

General Statement of the Problem ..... 1

The District Information ..... 7

The Surrounding Community ..... 12

National Content ..... 15

CHAPTER 2 – PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION ..... 18

Problem Evidence ..... 18

Probable Causes ..... 23

CHAPTER 3 ..... 29

Literature Review ..... 29

Project Objectives and Processes ..... 39

Methods of Assessments ..... 40

CHAPTER 4 – PROJECT RESULTS ..... 42

Historical Description of the Intervention ..... 42

Presentation and Analysis of Results ..... 44

Teacher Observation/Checklists ..... 47

Teacher Journals/Student Work ..... 48

Conclusions and Recommendations ..... 49

REFERENCES ..... 51

APPENDICES

A Parent Information Letter ..... 53

B Teacher Survey ..... 54

C Off-Task Checklist ..... 55

D Student Survey ..... 56

E People Hunt ..... 57

F On-Task Behavior Checklist ..... 58

G Teacher Journal ..... 59

H Cooperative Learning Lessons ..... 60

I Student Self-Evaluation ..... 61

J KWL ..... 62

# CHAPTER 1

# PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONTEXT

## General Statement of the Problem

The students of the targeted elementary class demonstrate poor comprehension and understanding of group skills, which results in poor achievement in group learning situations. This is evident by a behavior checklist, student surveys, and teacher observations.

## Site A

Site A is an elementary school comprised of grades pre-kindergarten through sixth with a total enrollment of 829 students. According to the School Report Card, a document required by the State Legislation, the social/ethnic background of the students is reported as 9.2% White, 0.7% Black, 88.4% Hispanic, 1.7% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0% Native American. There are 89.1% of students reported as low-income. Low-income students may come from families receiving public aid, may live in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, may be supported in foster homes with public funds, or may be eligible to receive free or reduced-priced lunches. There are 37.5% limited-English proficient students eligible for bilingual education at Site A. The school has an attendance rate of 96.5% and a student mobility rate of 19.8%. The percent of chronic truancy is reported as 0.6%. The number of chronic truants is four. The average class size is 21.8 students per class in kindergarten, 22.8 students per class in first grade,

27.0 students per class in third grade and 29 students per class in sixth grade. The time devoted to the teaching of core subjects is the average number of minutes of instruction per five-day school week in each subject area divided by five. The instructional time allotted for each subject in third grade is as follows: forty-eight minutes is devoted to mathematics, twenty-four minutes for science, one hundred forty-four minutes for English, and twenty-eight minutes for social science. For sixth grade: fifty-three minutes is devoted for mathematics, forty minutes for science, one hundred three minutes for English, and forty minutes for social science. At Site A, 100% of students' parents/guardians had personal contact with the school staff during the school year. Site A has successfully implemented the following:

- Instrumental band program for fifth and sixth grade students
- Chorus for grades five and six students
- After-school dance program
- After-school tutoring for recommended students
- After-school guidance counseling program
- Math Club
- Science Club
- Peer Leaders
- Arts and Crafts Club
- Workshops on writing are offered to parents
- Summer Bridges, a state summer school program, offered to third and sixth graders
- Summer school for fourth and fifth grades
- Early intervention during summer for pre-kindergarten ESL students and bilingual ESL classes

## Site B

Site B is an elementary school comprised of grades first through sixth with a total enrollment of 581 students. According to the School Report Card, a document required by the State Legislation, the social/ethnic background of the students is reported as 44.9% White, 7.4% Black, 46.5% Hispanic, 0.9% Asian/Pacific Islander and 0.3% Native American. There are 54.7% of students reported as low-income. Low-income students may come from families receiving public aid, may live in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, may be supported in foster homes with public funds, or may be eligible to receive free or reduced-priced lunches. The percentage of limited-English proficient students eligible for bilingual education is 33.4%. Site B has an attendance rate of 95.5% and a student mobility rate of 16.8%. The percent of chronic truancy is reported as 0.9%. The number of chronic truants is five. The average class size is 23 students per class in first and third grade and 22.2 students per class in sixth grade. The time devoted to the teaching of core subjects is the average number of minutes of instruction per five-day school week in each subject area divided by five. The instructional time allotted for each subject in third grade is as follows: fifty-five minutes is devoted to mathematics, twenty-five minutes for science, one hundred twenty-five minutes for English, and twenty-five minutes for social science. For sixth grade, sixty minutes is devoted for mathematics, forty minutes for science, one hundred twenty-five minutes for English, and thirty-five minutes for social science. At Site B, 100% of students' parents/guardians had personal contact with the school staff during the school year. Site B has successfully implemented the following:

- Exit criteria for students in grades one through sixth were shared with parents throughout the year along with the ways parents could help their child at home

- Additional help for meeting the exit criteria, such as tutoring and summer school
- Assessment instruments that demonstrated mastery of the exit criteria were developed and used in grades one through six
- New spelling series for students in grades two through six implemented and Open Court Phonics Program was used in both grades one and two
- Interactive learning stations (a monitor, VCR, three computers) with Internet access were installed in grades one through four classrooms
- A truancy interventionist worked with students and families to improve attendance at school and attendance court was started at the end of the 1999-2000 school year; the attendance rate remained constant
- Homework assignment books, school-wide assertive discipline plans, character education (Building Esteem in Students Today), DARE, Spirit Club, Student of the Week, and Talk It Out (conflict resolution program) remain in place

Site C

Site C is an elementary school comprised of grades kindergarten through fifth with a total enrollment of 614 students. According to the School Report Card, a document required by the State Legislation, the social/ethnic background of the students is reported as 11.6% White, 11.4% Black, 75.2% Hispanic, 1.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0% Native American. There are 52.6% of students reported as low-income. Low-income students may come from families receiving public aid, may live in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, may be supported in foster homes with public funds, or may be eligible to receive free or reduced-priced lunches. The percentage of limited-English proficient students eligible for bilingual education is 36.5%. Site C has an attendance rate of 95.5% and a student mobility rate of 31.9%. The

percent of chronic truancy is reported as 4.1%. The number of chronic truants is 23. The average class size is 24.3 students per class in kindergarten, 26.3 students per class in first grade, and 23.5 students per class in third grade. The time devoted to the teaching of core subjects is the average number of minutes of instruction per five-day school week in each subject area divided by five. The instructional time allotted for each subject in third grade is as follows: sixty minutes is devoted to mathematics, eighteen minutes for science, one hundred fifty-two minutes for English, and twenty-seven minutes for social science. At Site C, 100% of students' parents/guardians had personal contact with the school staff during the school year.

Site C has successfully implemented the following:

- A two million-dollar grant given by the county for a summer school program to strengthen skills in reading, writing, and math
- Reading Together USA Program implemented at 11 sites
- Reading Together USA Adult Training Program provided for parents at six elementary sites
- Title I staff at all elementary buildings aided teachers and principals with Power Reading Program
- STAR Reading Assessment and Developmental Reading Assessment used to identify students needing additional support to increase their reading achievement
- Conducted an intervention program for grades two through eight, providing additional assistance in reading and mathematics
- Conducted a pre-phonics and phonics intervention program for students in grades K, 1, and 2
- Began a bilingual component to the gifted programs with hopes to expand
- Established a district Math Task Force to develop short and long term goals for improving student achievement in math

## Site D

Site D is an elementary school comprised of grades one through four with a total enrollment of 650 students. According to the School Report Card, a document required by the State Legislation, the social/ethnic background of the students is reported as 70.4% White, 1.8% Black, 17.3% Hispanic, 10.4% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.2% Native American. There are 18.9% of students reported as low-income. Low-income students may come from families receiving public aid, may live in institutions for neglected or delinquent children, may be supported in foster homes with public funds, or may be eligible to receive free or reduced-priced lunches. The percentage of limited-English proficient students eligible for bilingual education is 9.5%. Site D has an attendance rate of 95% and a student mobility rate of 32.6%. The percent of chronic truancy is reported as 0%. The number of chronic truants is 0%. The average class size is 20.6 students per class in first grade and 25 students per class in third grade. The time devoted to the teaching of core subjects is the average number of minutes of instruction per five-day school week in each subject area divided by five. The instructional time allotted for each subject in third grade is as follows: sixty minutes is devoted to mathematics, twenty minutes for science, one hundred sixteen minutes for English, and twenty-six minutes for social science. At Site D, 100% of students' parents/guardians had personal contact with the school staff during the school year.

Site D has successfully implemented the following:

- Triple A, a gifted program for qualifying students beginning in second grade to meet the needs of gifted reading and math students
- Apriendo Jugando, an after-school program meeting once a week to meet the needs of the neediest, at-risk ESL (English As A Second Language) students

- Enrichment Summer School, a summer curriculum program with small class sizes to maximize this enrichment program with free to minimal cost to parents
- Student of the Week, a self-esteem program that features one child from each general classroom
- Star Program, a positive discipline program run throughout the school to promote attention to discipline
- Each classroom has one computer/printer along with central lab with Internet access

## The District Information

### Site A

Site A is located in a large metropolitan area of a mid-western state. As determined by state standards the school district is considered to be a unit district with an enrollment of 426,814. A unit district is one that provides education for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade and is under the direction of one superintendent and one school board. Due to the large size of the district, it is divided into sub-regions. The sub-region in which Site A is located has a total enrollment of 80,798 students.

The total number of elementary schools is 491 in this urban district. There are 392 regular elementary schools, 35 magnet schools, 24 community academies, 13 special schools, and 28 middle schools included in the number. Site A is considered to be a regular elementary school. There are 92 secondary schools in District A. Forty-eight are general/technological/academic prep schools, 16 are magnet schools, eight are community academies, seven are vocational schools, and 13 are special schools. District A has six Safe School Sites for disruptive students, and 27 sites for dropouts.

The racial/ethnic background for the District A is 9.9% White, 52.3% Black, 34.4% Hispanic, 3.2% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.2% Native American. The district is made up of 85.6% low-income students and 13.7% limited-English proficient students. The district's attendance is recorded at 91.6% and has a 26.6% mobility rate. The chronic truancy rate is 4.3% with 17,000 chronic truants. The average class size is 23.7 for kindergarten, 25.1 for first grade, 24.0 for third grade, and 25.0 for sixth grade. The percentage of teachers by racial/ethnic background and gender is 45.4% White, 41.3% Hispanic, 40.6% Black, 2.3% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.2% Native American, 23.1% male and 76.9% female, with a total of 23,723 teachers in the district.

The teachers in District A share an average teaching experience of 14.6 years. Teachers with a bachelor's degree make-up 53.7% and teachers with a master's degree and above represent 45.7%. The pupil to teacher ratio is 22.6:1 with the pupil to certified staff ratio being 15.4:1. The pupil to administrator ratio is 329.5:1. The average teacher salary is $50,411 with the administrators' salary being $87,703. The equalized assessed valuation per pupil is $90,863, while the school tax is $4.35 per $100. The instructional expenditure per pupil is $5,064 and the operating expenditure is $7,827. A state grant was given to the district for a summer school program to strengthen skills in reading, writing, and mathematics.

Site B

Site B is located in a suburb of a large metropolitan area in a mid-western state. As determined by the state guidelines, the school district is considered to be a unit district with an enrollment of 5,806. A unit district is one that provides education for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade and is under the direction of one superintendent and one school board. This district is more than nine million dollars in debt despite two tax increases in the last year

and has been on a financial watch list since 1992. The district is also under the control of a State Board of Education Financial Oversight Panel. Budget cuts have reduced services, as well as teacher and student morale and the maintenance has slipped badly as well.

The unit district serves students from five neighboring communities. There is a kindergarten building, five elementary buildings, a junior high, high school, and an alternative education building in the district.

The racial/ethnic background for District B is 53.4% White, 5.2% Black, 40.1% Hispanic, 0.8% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.4% Native American. District B is made up of 42.4% low-income students and 18.5% limited-English proficient students. The district's attendance is recorded at 94.9% with a 23.4% mobility rate. The chronic truancy rate is 16% with 910 chronic truants. The average class size is 22.4 for kindergarten, 22.6 for grade one, 22.7 for third grade, and 21.5 for sixth grade. The percentage of teacher by racial/ethnic background and gender is 93.2% White, 5.8% Hispanic, 1.0% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0% Blacks, and 0% Native Americans, 27.8% male and 72.2% female, with a total number of 310 teachers in the district.

The district's average teaching experience is 15.4 years. Teachers with bachelor's degree equals 53.3% and teachers with a master's degree and above represent 46.7%. The pupil to teacher ratio is 24.7:1 with the pupil to certified staff ratio being 15.9:1. The pupil to administrator ratio is 208.3:1. The average teacher salary is $48,365 with the administrators' average salary being $62,865. The equalized assessed valuation per pupil is $53,904 while the school tax is $4.71 per $100. The instructional expenditure per pupil is $3,911 and operating expenditure is $6,636. A two million-dollar state grant was given to the county for a summer school program to provide a summer program to strengthen skills in reading, writing, and math.

## Site C

Site C is located in a suburb of a large metropolitan area in a mid-western state. It is approximately 40 miles north of a major metropolitan area. As determined by the state guidelines, the school district is considered to be a unit district with an enrollment of 14,391. A unit district is one that provides education for students in kindergarten through twelfth grade and is under the direction of one superintendent and one school board. The unit district serves students from one community. There is one pre-school building, fourteen elementary schools, five middle schools, and one high school in three separate buildings in the district.

The racial/ethnic background of District C is 15% White, 26.2% Black, 56.3% Hispanic, 2.4% Asian/Pacific Islander, 0.1% Native American. The district is made up of 56.4% low-income students and 19.7% limited-English proficient students. The district's attendance is recorded at 92.2% with a 33% mobility rate. The chronic truancy rate is reported as 13.1% with 1,656 chronic truants. The average class size is 22.9 for kindergarten, 25.5 for grade one, and 24.4 for third grade. The percentage of teachers by racial/ethnic background and gender is 85.7% White, 5.4% Blacks, 8.4% Hispanic, 0.5 % Asian/Pacific Islander, 0% Native Americans, 26.6% male and 73.4% female, with a total number of 845 teachers in the district.

The district's average teaching experience is 12 years. Teachers with a bachelor's degree make up 57.7% and teachers with master's degree and above represent 42.3%. The pupil to teacher ratio is 22.1:1 with the pupil to certified staff ratio being 15:1. The pupil to administrator ratio is 330.1:1. The average teacher salary is $42,324 with the administrators' average salary being $71,010. The equalized assessed valuation per pupil is $56,423, while the school tax is $4.50 per $100. The instructional expenditure per pupil is $3,888 and operating expenditure is

$6,810. A two million-dollar state grant was given to the district for a summer school program to strengthen skills in reading, writing, and math.

Site D

Site D is located in a suburb of a large metropolitan area in a mid-western state. It is approximately 30 miles north of a major metropolitan area. As determined by the state guidelines, the school district is considered to be a K-8 district with an enrollment of 3,363. A K-8 district is one that provides education for students in K-8 grade and is under the direction of one superintendent and one school board. The unit district serves students from four neighboring communities. There is one kindergarten building, two elementary buildings, one elementary option building, one middle school building, and one junior high school building in the district.

The racial/ethnic background for the district is 70.7% White, 2.1% Black, 18.0% Hispanic, 9.1% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0.1% Native American. The district is made up of 15.2% low-income students and 7.4% limited-English proficient students. The district's attendance is recorded at 95.4% and a mobility rate of 20.6% is reported. The chronic truancy rate is 0.2% with five chronic truants. The average class size is 21.4 for kindergarten, 20.9 for grade one, 23.2 for third grade, 25.2 for sixth grade. The percentage of teachers by racial/ethnic background and gender is 97.2% White, 0.9% Blacks, 1.4% Hispanic, 0.5% Asian/Pacific Islander, and 0% Native Americans: 12% male and 88% female, with a total number of 216 teachers in the district.

The district's average teaching experience is 15.9 years. Teachers with a bachelor's degree make up 44.7% and teachers with masters and above represent 55.3%. The pupil to teacher ratio is 17.3:1 with the pupil to certified staff ratio being 13.7:1. The pupil to administrator ratio is 240.2:1. The average teacher salary is $52,625 with the administrators'

average salary being $88,274. The instructional expenditure per pupil is $4,164 and operating expenditure is $7,485.

## The Surrounding Community

### Site A

Site A is located in the northwestern part of a large city. The population of the city is 2,783,726 people; 45.4% White, 19.6% Hispanic, 39.1% Black, 3.7% Asian, 0.3% Native American, and 11.6% is made of other races. Due to the size of the city, this information is strictly about the neighborhood of Site A. The average home in Neighborhood A costs $253,815.53 and is 71 years old. The average lot size is 0.56 acres. The neighborhood is located near public transportation lines to connect it to the rest of the city.

The population of Neighborhood A falls into three categories. The first group represents 34.4% of the population and has a median age of 33.6 years. Almost 40% of these people are foreign born and speak a language other than English at home. Half are couples, and half are single parent households. The median household income is $29,500 and the average commute time to work is 43% longer than the average in the country. Over 50% of the dwellings are renter-occupied and built before 1950.

The second group represents 24.02% of the population in Neighborhood A. This group has a median age of 40 with 35% being of the age 65 and over. Single-person households account for more than 40% of this population with few children. The median income is $34, 900 and 40% of the residents receive Social Security and 20% are on a pension. Sixty-seven percent of the homes are multi-unit dwellings built before 1970.

The third group represents 16.06% of the population in Neighborhood A. The median age is 32.9 years. Less than 30% are foreign born, but 40% speak a language other than English at home. Over 50% of the population has young children. The median income in this group is

$42,900 and unemployment is low. The majority of homes in this group is single-family, built between 1950 and 1969 (School Report Card, 2000).

Site B

Site B's district is made up of five small communities. Community one has a population of 3,550, community two has a population of 16,434, community three has a population of 1,251 community four has a population of 4,045 and community five has a population of 134. Not all of community two is located within the school district.

In 1990, 48 homes in community one were sold. Forty-three of these are in the price range of $1-90,000, four homes were in the price range of $91,000-140,999, and three units were sold for $141-200,999. In community two, 393 units were sold for $1-90,000, 71 units were sold for $91,000-140,999, five units were sold for $141-2000,999, and one unit was sold for $201-250,999 for a total of 472 units sold. In community three, 16 units were sold for $1-90,000 and one unit was sold for $91-140,999 for a total of 17 units sold. Community four sold 116 units for $1-90,000, six units for $91-140,999, and one unit for $141-200,999 for a total of 123 units. Community five was not listed on the 1999 Municipalities as seen in the table below.

Table 1

Comparison of Housing Units Sold in Each Community by House Value

| Community | <$89,999 | $90,000-$139,999 | $200,000-$250,000 | Totals |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 43 | 4 | 0 | 51 |
| 2 | 393 | 71 | 1 | 51 |
| 3 | 16 | 1 | 0 | 102 |
| 4 | 116 | 6 | 0 | 204 |

Between 1980 and 1990 community one grew 39.3% from 968 units to 1,348. Community two grew 34% from 3,763 units to 5,041 units. Community three grew 0.8% from

365 units to 368 units, and community four grew 0.9% from 1,344 to 1,356 units. Community five declined 25.9% in housing units from 54 units in 1980 to 40 units in 1990. In the communities there are approximately 200 units of Section 8 housing, numerous units of subsidized housing, and two trailer park communities with a total of about 570 units.

The communities are also served by a park district that operates a child development center, fitness center, aquatic center, golf course and nature museum, along with a variety of sports and recreational activities. The community is located near a train line to a major metropolitan city (School Report Card, 2000).

Site C

The population of Site C is 77,324 with the following reported; 37.7% Hispanic, 34.14% Whites, 19.74% Blacks, 5.1% Native American, 3.66% Asian/Pacific Islander, and other ethnicity's making up the remaining 4.26% of the population. The average household income is $47,085. The median home value if $72,600 while the median monthly rent is $428. There are approximately eight Section 8 housing sites. This community has it's own regional airport. There are nine major firms in this community. Pharmaceuticals, glass and paper products, electrical and electronic components, marine and recreation motor products, and chemicals are the products of these major firms. This community is home to the county's courthouse. There are 14 major institutions serving this community, making total financial assets of $1.5 billion (School Report Card, 2000).

Site D

There are over 35,000 dwelling units in the combined communities feeding into Site D. Numerous light industrial firms, along with office/research centers and one large, indoor

shopping center are the new components of the area's sound economy. Of the three major surrounding communities, the average size of each town/village is 20,000 people.

The major township of Site D has a population of 64,947 with 22,592 households. The median age is 35.4 with the average household size reporting as 2.87. The average household income is $137,822 with the median home value being $298,340. The largest percentage of the population is made up of ages 0-24, followed by the 35-44 age group.

The largest percentage of annual household income is in the category of $150,000. The median household income is $116,308. The major village within Site D lists the homes ranging in price from $135,000 to $1,300,000. Growth in Site D is up by 22.8%.

The special services in Site D would include inter-linking park system which unites numerous small sections of parks with ball fields, tennis courts, and bike paths. The park's main attraction is the children's kingdom, one of the state's largest community-made wooden playgrounds. The community's large, indoor shopping center is a valued asset within the surrounding area. Despite the numerous light industrial firms, all are tastefully camouflaged by the village board's rigid controls to maintain a respectful balance within the community (School Report Card, 2000).

## National Context of the Problem

The current social/educational contract with our nation's children is as follows: "You must go to school, but once you're there, learning is optional" (Lezotte, 1997, p. 3). The primary focus of schooling seems to be memorizing facts, as quoted by William Glasser, "Briefly stated, most schooling is restricted to two common practices: repetitive hand calculating . . . memorized facts and formulas that will never be readily retained" (Glasser, 2000, p. 10). Teachers are faced with the fact that a majority of students, even those experiencing success, believe that much of

the present academic curriculum is not worth the effort it takes to learn. No matter how well the teachers motivate them, if students do not find quality in what they are asked to do in their classes, they will not work hard enough to learn the material. The students with poor academic achievement deal with their low grades by rebelling and working even less than before. This results in off-task behavior by students not engaged in their learning.

The amount of teacher time spent on off-task behavior decreases the amount of instructional time in the classroom. In school, this resistance is seen as refusal to do school work, to follow the rules, and to pay attention. The refusal to pay attention is so widespread that it has been, in Glasser's opinion, wrongly classified as brain damage (ADD and ADHD) and treated with medication.

Off-task behavior may also stem from poor social skills. "Students today generally do not come to school with the same prosocial values once common; they are not respectful, caring, helpful, or cooperative as they were twenty years ago" (Kagan, 1994, p.2:2). This creates a climate that is resistant to learning because the teacher must spend time solving social skill problems. Unfortunately, as noted by Kagan (1994), students of today do not know how to get along well with each other, care for each other, or care for themselves. Teachers must now spend time teaching social skills in addition to teaching traditional curriculum.

Classrooms need to emphasize group skills that will not only be useful in present classroom settings, but also be used in the future workplace. "The six additional workplace skills, problem solving, applying knowledge, leading, cooperating, speaking, and listening, are neither required nor stressed in most classrooms" (Glasser, p. 14). If students exit school already knowing the skill of working together, companies will not have to spend money training new

employees to learn this skill. Glasser believes that the skills of speaking and listening, the most important real world skills, can only be learned through practice.

Kagan (1994) states that the social structure of schools is out of step with the reality of the workplace. Without change, schools will be further and further out of step because the economy is shifting toward high technology and information related jobs in which cooperative and interpersonal skills are in demand. Success in the real world depends on how well the workers and managers get along together. Significant effort and money from corporations goes into teaching cooperation and leadership. This shows that students finish their education unprepared for the social demands of our modern economy. Students working in cooperative groupings learn the skills necessary to succeed in school. Most importantly, if taught effectively, these skills may transfer into their adult worlds.

# CHAPTER 2
# PROBLEM DOCUMENTATION

## Problem Evidence

In order to document the extent of inadequate social skills, low academic retention, and little interest in academic advancement, several methods of data collection were used. The problem was documented through a teacher survey, teacher observation checklists, behavioral checklists, and weekly journal entries. Students were given a pre-survey to assess their thoughts and understanding of the targeted social skills and academic achievement.

## Student Survey

A student completed survey (Appendix D) regarding students' attitudes about social skills and learning styles was given to the students in four targeted classrooms. It was administered to 26 first graders, 22 ESL second graders, and 56 third graders. The surveys were administered in the morning during various class times. Copies of the student surveys were distributed to the students and they were asked to omit their names. The survey was read and explained, question-by-question, to the students. The students answered each question by choosing a response that reflected their feelings about cooperative groups, preferences of learning styles, and with whom they most wished to work. These students were given three choices which indicated agreement, neutrality, and disagreement. These choices were represented by pictorial facial expressions. The facial expressions were indicated by a smiling

face, a neutral face, and a frowning face to assist the primary students' understanding of an appropriate response. The children marked their answers by coloring their choice of facial expressions. There was a 98% response rate. Two percent of the targeted population was not surveyed due to absences from school. The results were compiled across sites and presented below in Table 2.

Table 2
Student Cooperative Pre-Survey Results, September 2001
Targeted Social Preference/Learning Style

| N=98 respondents | Agree | Neutral | Disagree |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1) It's okay to play with kids who are different from self: | 88 | 8 | 12 |
| 2) I can learn from my peers: | 64 | 24 | 11 |
| 3) It is hard to work with kids not liked: | 36 | 38 | 25 |
| 4) Do not like working in teacher chosen groups: | 32 | 20 | 47 |
| 5) Want to be with friends in groups: | 81 | 14 | 4 |
| 6) Groups are a waste of time: | 36 | 15 | 48 |
| 7) Learn better from teacher: | 65 | 24 | 10 |
| 8) Groups can be fun: | 83 | 11 | 5 |
| 9) Groups make me think more: | 61 | 20 | 18 |
| 10) Want to work more with groups: | 63 | 25 | 11 |
| 11) Groups make me feel good: | 71 | 23 | 5 |
| 12) Mind wanders when teacher talks: | 25 | 23 | 5 |
| 13) Enjoy the material more when with a group: | 54 | 31 | 13 |
| 14) Work is easier with peers: | 58 | 26 | 15 |
| 15) I help peers with my strengths: | 88 | 9 | 2 |
| 16) I learn to work with different kids: | 68 | 27 | 4 |
| 17) Groups help me learn the material better: | 63 | 26 | 29 |
| 18) I become a better group member: | 75 | 18 | 6 |
| 19) Want to become better friends with classmates: | 91 | 6 | 1 |

The results of the student survey indicated that social skills were problematic for almost 50% of the children, as evidenced in questions three and four in Table 2 on page 19. When the children were asked if they enjoyed working cooperatively with non-friends, almost half responded negatively. The students also exhibited a strong negative attitude towards group work. The students saw group work as a waste of time as indicated in question number six on page 19. This shows that some of the students of the targeted first, second, and third grade classes exhibit a similar lack of interest in developing improved social skills. Without these valuable social skills and the ability to work well together with children who are non-friends, students may show less interest with working in cooperative teams. Twenty-five percent of the targeted students indicated that their minds tend to wander under direct instruction from the teacher. The majority of the children (65 out of 104 students) still feel that they learn more from the teacher as shown in Table 2 pertaining to question number seven on page 19. The results of this survey show students have difficulty with social skills and appropriate peer interaction.

The teacher survey (Appendix B) in Table 3 on page 19 was another tool used to document the problem. A total of 87 teachers were surveyed from the four sites. The teaching experience ranged from zero to one year for eight teachers, two to five years for 13 teachers, six to 15 years for 20 teachers, 16 to 24 years for 24 teachers, and more than 25 years for 22 teachers. Of these polled educators, three marked their classes as above average in ability level, 19 marked their classes as average level classrooms, 20 with below average classrooms, and 45 with a mixed level classrooms.

Table 3

Teacher Cooperative Survey Results, September, 2001

N=87

| Teacher Survey on Cooperative Learning | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Q. # | Subject Matter | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Undecided | Agree | Strongly Disagree |
| 5 | Cooperative learning is grade appropriate | 4 | 6 | 6 | 47 | 14 |
| 6 | Number of days in cooperative training | 5 | 14 | 14 | 34 | 25 |
| 7 | Teacher preparedness | 5 | 17 | 15 | 42 | 7 |
| 8 | Fits teaching philosophy | 3 | 0 | 11 | 51 | 21 |
| 9 | Able to implement it successfully | 1 | 5 | 13 | 55 | 13 |
| 10 | Years using this method | 7 | 10 | 20 | 28 | 18 |
| 11 | Effort needed to use cooperative learning | 4 | 30 | 9 | 30 | 13 |
| 12 | Valuable tool in teaching | 3 | 9 | 8 | 44 | 23 |
| 13 | Promotes friendships | 1 | 2 | 9 | 58 | 16 |
| 14 | Positive toward learning | 2 | 8 | 12 | 51 | 14 |
| 15 | Efficient strategy in teaching | 3 | 8 | 12 | 44 | 19 |
| 16 | Too many discipline problems | 7 | 51 | 14 | 10 | 4 |
| 17 | Holds bright students back | 14 | 44 | 10 | 20 | 4 |
| 18 | Too much student responsibility | 14 | 47 | 12 | 8 | 6 |
| 19 | Too noisy in classroom | 8 | 41 | 14 | 17 | 4 |
| 20 | Too little time for efficiency | 7 | 48 | 13 | 14 | 4 |
| 21 | Students lack skills for group work | 7 | 48 | 10 | 21 | 2 |
| 22 | Others do most of the work | 4 | 35 | 18 | 26 | 3 |
| 23 | Difficult to evaluate for grading | 9 | 36 | 19 | 18 | 4 |
| 24 | Becomes off-task behavior time | 4 | 34 | 24 | 16 | 9 |
| 25 | Competition is the best preparation for life | 2 | 37 | 28 | 15 | 3 |
| 26 | Cooperative learning produces deeper understanding | 1 | 7 | 15 | 50 | 12 |
| 27 | Class comes prepared with appropriate social skills | 1 | 36 | 19 | 28 | 1 |
| 28 | Need to teach social skills | 2 | 7 | 21 | 36 | 25 |
| 29 | Enhances social skills | 7 | 2 | 9 | 49 | 20 |
| 30 | Too much emphasis placed on social skills | 8 | 57 | 12 | 1 | 8 |

A total of 87 teachers from four sites were given a survey and asked their level of experience in both general teaching experience and experience within the context of cooperative learning. The teachers were often in agreement when it came to the notion that it was necessary to teach social skills within the context of their classrooms. As noted in the data collected from Table 3 on page 21, question number 28, teachers indicated that the need to create better social skills was clearly evident. It was interesting to note that most teachers showed concern with off-task behaviors occurring during cooperative learning sessions as reflected in question number 24. Another revealing question was the teachers' concern that too often students expect other group members to do the majority of the academic work within the confines of group learning. This data was clearly illustrated in question number 22. While most targeted teachers indicated that cooperative learning was held as a highly prized tool to use within their classrooms, question number 16 exhibits the concern that often discipline problems occur amongst the teams. The discipline problems naturally point to the lack of today's social skills. Sadly, despite the teachers' enthusiasm for cooperative learning, they indicated some trouble areas, which need to be addressed.

## Teacher Observation Checklist

Once again, the overwhelming research indicated that inappropriate behaviors often occurred when students' social skills were initially observed prior to cooperative group learning. After observing students in early stages of cooperative learning, the teachers recognized definite repetitive patterns of negative off-task behaviors in some children. Of the children lacking motivation to stay on-task, almost half were unable to sustain independent learning for a suitable amount of time. The amount of time varied among grade levels of the designated classrooms.

During the course of the research, the time allotted for cooperative learning ranged from 25 to 30 minutes. The observation checklist indicated that many students were in need of remedial social skills instruction. Many students lacked the social skills to work effectively with each other. Similar behaviors were observed throughout much of the regular class time as well.

## Anecdotal Records

Through the use of anecdotal records, the teachers have documentation of students demonstrating poor social skills and lack of general enthusiasm towards learning. At all sites, children were observed engaging in non-productive talking, failing to keep hands to themselves, making loud disrespectful comments towards each other, and generally demonstrating off-task behaviors during both cooperative groups and direct instruction. The students' documented lack of participation is an indication of their lack of understanding and inability to work with each other.

## Probable Causes

Educators will readily attest to the fact that inappropriate social behaviors are evident everywhere, but why has this reached such a fevered pitch? Research shows us that the decay of the traditional family, as well as the lack of appropriate role models in today's society are two of the strongest factors in this decline. The pervasiveness of television as both role model and baby-sitter is yet another factor resulting in students' lack of social skills. It is also apparent that today's teachers can no longer turn a blind eye to this prevalent problem. The educational system must not be part of the problem, but face this head on and correct this lack of social skills students exhibit. More probable causes are suggested in our professional literature review.

Many of today's children are spending more time in front of the television than with family, doing homework, or playing with friends. Researchers are seeing a time in our culture in

which children now live centered around the television. According to Rutherford, it is estimated that the average American child watches television at least of three to five hours each day and that by the time they reach high school, most children will have spent more time in front of the television than in the classroom (Rutherford, 2001). This television watching figures out to waste, "nine years by the time they turn 65" (Vespe, 2000, p.1). While these figures seem so alarming, they are even more devastating when one considers the negative feedback consumed from the majority of television programming. Added to this sad equation is the fact that with the lack of parental supervision, more violent and non-age appropriate programming is finding itself in homes with an impressionable audience.

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry emphatically states that "television is a powerful influence in developing value systems and shaping behavior" (AACAP, 1997, p.1). This research goes on to show that children become immune to the horror of violence and are gradually accepting violence as a means to solving problems. The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry further states that "extensive viewing of television violence by children causes greater aggressiveness" (AACP, 1997, p.1). This violence is more likely to be imitated from the television violence to which they have been so exposed. Parents and teachers are privy to conversations of many students demonstrating the results of rude and explicit language. This inappropriate viewing material is not just to be blamed on the television programming.

Total blame now exists beyond television. Video games and children's cartoons are equally at fault for more saturation of impressionable young minds. Studies show that many video games actively encourage competitive behaviors, aggressiveness, and violence as an end to action rather than cooperation and "that the world of video games has little sense of community

and few team players" (Cesarone, 1994, p. 2). According to the National Institute on Media and Family, violent video games are responsible for more children viewing the world as a hostile place and arguing with teachers with more frequency. Children's socialization skills have little time or experience to be cultivated. The neighborhood games are now replaced with animated violence so pervasive that many adults and children have become desensitized to its sting and negative meanings. The rude behaviors of name-calling, lack of teacher respect, and the propensity towards pushing and shoving other children is now seen as common behaviors in the classroom.

Even if society could totally put the blame on television programming and computer games, the choice of what the children watch must be placed in the hands of the parents. Without the necessary parental supervision, once again the children are left alone to make choices. The once revered invention of the television has now turned into the "electronic baby-sitter." Again, with the missed opportunities to advance social skills within the perimeters of the neighborhood, socialization comes down to hour after hour with the computer or television. These important personal interactions once seen as so basic to childhood are producing a generation of children who begin in the educational process as needy children. This increasing population of needy children must be lead through the most remedial social steps just to succeed in early primary grades. Each year, teachers remark on the heavy increase of the troubled student population. Often, educators comment that they spend more time on discipline with those needy individuals rather than spending time in content areas.

Sadly, due to societal changes around us, one of the most apparent causes of the problem is the shift in the traditional family. The traditional family has changed radically to encompass more stressed parents and stepparents shuttling children back and forth between

multiple homes. The hours of personal interaction are often limited to the brief time of a car ride to piano lessons or running to Dad's house to pick up the weekend duffel bag of clothing and homework. According to the Nielsen Media Research, "the average parent and child spend 38.5 minutes per week in meaningful conversation" (Nielsen Media Research, 2000, p. 2). The new family unit now extends to include two over-worked parents, more single parent families, and homes with grandparents as guardians. Whichever way the family is set up, the excessive demands of today's parents creates a whirlwind of stress and lack of quality time. With less time in the family setting, less time is available for quality interaction and development of valuable social skills.

In past generations, children had numerous family and societal icons to hold up as role models. It is no wonder that today's children have difficulty identifying with any clear role models. With more and more single parent families, a significant role model is often absent from the home. To fill the empty time and lack of involvement from family, the students often turn toward the negative messages from television and video games. These negative role models are routine with television programming such as "The Simpsons" or any form of after-school talk show. The negative role models are often seen as someone humorous rather than someone or something that should be turned off and quickly forgotten.

Today's children are faced with a complex world of rage, self-involvement, and lack of respect for others. Our society dictates that everyone else is to blame. No one takes responsibility, especially in these litigious times. This hostile environment supports the notion that social skills have little value in today's society. It is no wonder that children hold little respect for others as this is the message learned from parents, television, and society as a whole.

While it is easiest to point blame at all the causes occurring elsewhere, it is time for the schools to also examine the problem within its own context. Are educators guilty as well? Many teachers recognize this lack of appropriate social skills. Many teachers see the clear evidence and recognize the tell-tale factors of this problem, but most teachers wish to neither take the time nor effort to correct students who lack these skills. The educator is overwhelmed with overcrowded classrooms, less time to teach subject matters, balancing self-esteem with the correct dosage of discipline, and to communicate with the demands of the parents. It is no wonder that most teachers would rather turn a deaf ear to the daily ramblings of the socially needy areas in the classroom. Teaching social skills is not typically listed in the state curriculum or examined in the state tests. Furthermore, many educators feel it takes multiple teachers or the entire school to create a new school-wide program initiating appropriate social awareness.

## Attitudes Toward Learning/Social Skills

Certain conditions make it less likely that the students' attention and thoughts will lead to deeper understanding of the academic studies. When one researcher questioned her pupils about working cooperatively, some of the responses were that they were only interested in cooperative grouping if they had control of the selection of these groups. Many children in the research study showed that they were only interested in working with friends. Working side by side with non-friends presented some obstacles to the learning process. Without the basic skills of getting along with others, taking the time to listen to all members, and showing respect and support for all viewpoints, students create a huge void in this otherwise fabulous tool for learning.

Other teachers balk at using cooperative lessons because they feel it takes too much time or effort, as stated in data found in Table 3 on page 21, pertaining to question number 11.

When teachers at the four sites were surveyed, some of their responses reflected the attitude that in many of the children's teams, the strongest team members would be responsible for completing the work. With limited time and other concerns about pure academic achievement, when does the teacher find the time to teach or monitor valuable social skills? While the majority of the survey respondents indicated a positive reaction towards working cooperatively, the largest problem remains that most students simply do not know how to work together effectively. This is especially true of younger students. When children were observed in a variety of academic settings, several students demonstrated a severe lack of social developmental skills.

The lack of social skills can affect youngsters' desire to work together effectively. The act of socializing, for many children, depends on the value his peer group places on it. Once again, researchers discovered that educators must work against a strong deterrent learned within today's culture; that only the individual matters and others are not worth their time. Teachers need to set up a strong, supportive, loving climate in which everyone matters at all times. Furthermore, if a student sees value in assisting others in the group, this student will be more concerned and supportive during cooperative activities. Students who perceive working together in groups as a fun and beneficial activity will begin to relax and learn to work for deeper understanding of the content area.

# CHAPTER 3
# THE SOLUTION STRATEGY

## Literature Review

Successful workers need to demonstrate excellent comprehension skills and understanding of group skills. One of the many jobs of educators is to prepare students for the employment world of tomorrow. Teachers reinforce group skills that illustrate comprehension and understanding on a regular basis. Success in the workplace stems from participants getting along with each other. However, many studies have shown that companies have to spend time and money giving new employees training in social and team building skills. Perhaps this demonstrates that schools are failing to prepare students for the work force. Currently, schools are providing students with merely the technical knowledge that it takes to do a job, but are not teaching them the social skills necessary to cooperate with co-workers. Schools must become responsible for teaching the process of learning, the process of teaching others, and most importantly, the process of working well with others. Although information learned in school may become outdated by the time the students enter the workforce, the skills of speaking, listening, and caring for others are and will always remain essential and timeless skills.

Teaching the process of working with others is a new and different attitude. Traditionally, students are taught in a competitive atmosphere. Unfortunately, the competitive classroom emphasizes working against one's neighbor rather than with them. In these classrooms, students

end up fighting for the teacher's approval, the best grade, and/or a top class rank. Initially all students want to excel, but only a few manage to reach and maintain their position at the top. Those students who habitually outshine the rest leave the others behind feeling inadequate, rejected, and more than a little resentful. This negative atmosphere and unfair hierarchy has been documented in second grade classrooms where children are as young as seven and eight years old (Kagan, 1994).

Such an individualistically focused environment is not conducive to a positive learning environment. Promoting such individualism in today's classrooms is inconsistent and harmful to the philosophies of major companies where these students will one day hold jobs. Alarmingly, the number one reason employees are fired from their jobs is due to their inability to get along and work with others (Kagan, 1994).

Promoting competition in the classroom encourages students to remain within their ethnic and socio-economic groups, thus creating an added vice to an already divided classroom. This is an increasing problem in today's rapidly changing society. What was once the majority has now becoming the minority. The United States, once called the "melting pot" because of its many ethnic groups melting together, is now more of a "salad bowl", with each cultural group struggling to maintain its language, customs, and traditions. Now, more and more students of diverse races and cultures make up a classroom population. This enormous diversity increases tension between ethnic groups who compete for power and status in the classroom as well as outside of the classroom. To further complicate the problem, many students' cultures do not always adapt to the learning style of traditional education, thus creating even more tension, confusion, and resentment of one another. If diversity is to be viewed as an asset to be built upon in schools, rather than a problem to be solved, schools must do more to foster positive

social relationships and interactions among students of different ethnic backgrounds rather than create competitive and individualistic educational settings (Slavin, 1999).

Diversity is not the only catalyst in today's competitive classroom. The traditional family unit is also changing factor, which can increase negative social relationships between children in school. More and more, children are coming to school without support and care from home. Single parent homes and troubled environments hinder a child's ability to acquire positive social skills that might otherwise be learned in traditional, caring family structures. Many students turn to television for company and entertainment in an otherwise empty home. Social norms and behaviors are taught by the likes of "MTV", "The WorldWide Wrestling Federation", and "South Park." Without the love, support, encouragement, and modeling of correct social skills, these children end up learning negative social behaviors. In the most severe cases, students become at-risk. The constant barrage of negative social influences leaves children with no problem solving skills. The children often become violent and resentful in school settings and end up dropping out all together.

The question for educators now becomes: "How can we teach positive social skills without loosing valuable time for curriculum instruction?" After a review of the literature the answer to that question becomes cooperative learning. Cooperative learning incorporates a group of three to four students who work together to achieve a common goal: mastery of academic material. The groups are usually pre-chosen by the teacher and typically contain students of mixed ability levels, mixed ethnicity, and mixed genders. The groups are referred to as teams and are given points to reinforce the importance of teamwork and use of positive social skills. Individual grades are given to reinforce the importance of hard work from each team member and are given to ensure accountability. In short, the purpose of cooperative learning is

to enhance the academic achievement of students by providing them with the opportunity to learn from and encourage each other (Slavin, 1999).

The earliest form of cooperative learning can be traced back to the settlers. Unavoidable circumstances forced pioneer families to tutor their children in groups. Eventually families began clustering their children into one-room schoolhouses. The teachers during this time were not much older than the children. Often these teachers relied on the students to help each other with the lessons at hand. Surprisingly, older students broadened their understanding of varied concepts by teaching them to the younger children. The younger children, in turn, were able to get the attention they needed during times when the teacher was not available. Although the term cooperative learning was never used during these times, the practice of students teaching students became the teaching method of choice.

The beginning of the use of the term cooperative learning dates back to the year 1806. A man by the name of Johann Amos Comenius opened the Lancastrian School in New York. Comenius believed that students would benefit both by teaching and being taught by other students. This idea widely spread and was used in many one-room schoolhouses throughout the country. In the early 1900's, Colonel Francis Parker emerged as the new cooperative learning advocate. Parker was the Superintendent of Quincy Massachusetts Public Schools. Parker's methods of cooperative learning dominated the American education system during this time. Formal training in cooperative learning strategies at the University of Minnesota did not begin until the 1960's. In the 1970's, David DeVries and Keith Edwards developed more cooperative learning strategies at John Hopkins University. Today, many researchers continue to contribute to the cooperative learning file. Robert Slavin, Spencer Kagan, and David and Roger Johnson are at the forefront of educating educators about cooperative learning.

Researchers are trying to find how successful competitive efforts, cooperative efforts, and individualistic efforts are in promoting achievement and productivity. Results have clearly indicated that working together achieves greater productivity and higher achievement than working independently. Furthermore, results also indicated that cooperative learning produces higher-level reasoning, greater transfer of learning, and more frequent generation of new solutions.

The research also demonstrated the collective strength of cooperative learning. This is even true when individuals differ in ethnicity, social class, and intellectual ability. Research shows when students work in heterogeneous groupings, the task results in a more positive view of one another. Social support is also clearly evident. In ethnic integration and mainstreaming, cooperative learning becomes an essential prerequisite. As these groupings become more positive, member commitment increases, personal responsibility increases, and a willingness to tackle more difficult tasks increases. As if this was not enough to persuade administrators and teachers toward the cooperative approach in teaching, the added bonus of greater psychological health and higher self-esteem is also factored in to this equation.

Recent studies have examined the positive effects cooperative learning has on student achievement. The following examples display the typical outcomes of these studies. The first, conducted in 1995, researched 52 independent studies (Slavin, 1999). These studies were conducted over a period of four weeks in regular secondary education classrooms. These studies specifically measured the effects of student achievement. The effects of the cooperative learning groups, or the experimental groups, were compared to the effects of traditionally taught control groups. The same educational objectives were taught in all classes. Of these studies, 33 (63%) found significantly greater achievement in the experimental, rather than the control group.

Sixteen (33%) found no difference, and in only three studies did the traditional classroom outperform the cooperative learning classroom (Slavin, 1994).

Recently, research on the effects cooperative learning has on cross-ethnic student relations has also been optimistic. In one particular study conducted by Robert Slavin, students were asked to list their best friends at the beginning of the study and again at the end. The number of friendship choices students made outside their ethnic group was clearly greater for those students who participated in cooperative learning activities. Even two months after the experiment, those students who had participated in the study remained friends with students outside their own ethnic groups (Slavin, 1996).

Research continues to provide educators with additional documented positive effects of cooperative learning. Cooperative learning has been shown to increase the social acceptance of mainstreamed students. Improvements in the self-esteem and self-worth of students have been documented. Furthermore, cooperative learning has been credited in positively affecting students' attitudes towards school (Slavin, 1994).

Researchers aren't the only ones singing praises in the name of cooperative learning. Today's classroom teachers have experienced the benefits as well. For example, Dan Workman, a math teacher at Glenbrook North High School, in Northbrook, Illinois, stated that within the first three weeks of class, he used to be able to tell which students would survive and which students would fail (Costa, 1992). Mr. Workman is proud to report that now the majority of his students are successful due to cooperative teams used in his classroom. Within the new cooperative learning classroom, concentration is at a new high because of a more creative approach to a once boring course. Data taken from his classes showed that class members not only knew each other better, but also took a more supportive role in tutoring each other toward

more successful outcomes. Most interesting though, was the fact that the non-cooperative classes at Glenbrook North showed a larger divergent set of mean scores, while the cooperative classes scored higher and with a much closer set of test scores. Mr. Workman also pointed out that the percentage of lost or incomplete homework dropped dramatically with the emphasis of group responsibility.

Dan Workman is not the only educator that has found success with cooperative learning. Barbara Hansen, a high school English teacher at Wilmington High School, in Wilmington, Illinois, claimed great success due to cooperative classrooms (Costa, 1992). Ms. Hansen portrayed her teaching as "BC" (before cooperation) and "AC" (after cooperation). She initially painted the picture of the traditional, orderly English class in contrast to the bustling and creative atmosphere of cooperation. Her student failure rate dropped from 15 percent down to four percent after incorporating cooperative learning strategies. She was elated with the student success rate and the marked growth of student production. While not every element in learning can be measured, Hansen reported other positive changes in her room as well. The enjoyment factor is an important element, which cannot be overlooked by the researchers' statistics. She relayed that the students were more on-task and invented creative ways to help each other review the material. The "before" and "after" pictures of her classroom leave no doubt in her mind the invaluable benefits cooperative learning can have on a classroom.

Even amidst the positive research and personal triumphs regarding cooperative learning there are opponents. However, most opponents of cooperative learning do not fully understand its necessary components. They charge that during group work one child ends up doing everything while the others get a free ride. This is unfair, some say, and rightly so. In order to execute lessons in true cooperative learning style, there must be two key elements

present: first, a common goal or purpose set for the team members to achieve, and secondly, individual accountability. Without both of these components, students will merely engage in group work and will not reap the invaluable benefits that true cooperative learning has been proven to bring.

Spencer Kagan, a leading researcher and promoter of cooperative learning, has created a simple, hassle-free way for educators to begin implementing cooperative strategies in their classrooms. Many of his ideas are based on the previous works of the Johnson brothers and Robert Slavin. However, unlike those researchers, Kagan approaches cooperative learning through the use of instructional strategies or structures. Structures are content-free ways of organizing cooperative learning lessons. One example of a structure is "Think-Pair-Share." When using this structure, students are paired together. They are given a task to solve and asked to think independently, share with their partner, and finally share the answer with the class. Another example of a structure is "Numbered Heads Together." This is a widely used cooperative structure. Each student in a group is given a number ranging from one to four. At the end of the activity the teacher calls on all the number "ones" to share their answers with the whole group, then all the number "twos" share their answers, and so on. This continues until all the students have had a chance to share. By using these different structures, a teacher can offer the students many ways to learn, process, and transfer the same educational content. Kagan recommends using cooperative learning structures as the initial way of introducing cooperative learning to students. These simple structures tend to help the students get comfortable with the idea of working with others to accomplish a task.

After the students and teacher feel comfortable with Kagan's structures, the next phase of his cooperative approach is the "Learning Together" phase. This approach, originally

developed by Johnson and Johnson, Holubuc, and Roy (1984), but later adapted by Kagan, details what steps the teacher needs to take before and during a cooperative learning lesson. Before each lesson, the teacher must specify the academic objective, decide on group sizes, assign students' to groups, assign the students roles within their groups, and gather materials to be used. During each lesson the teacher must provide groups with assistance, teach collaborative skills, provide closure to the lesson, evaluate learning, and assess how well each group functioned together. It is especially important that during this stage the teacher introduces various team-building activities in order for the group to become comfortable working with each other. Activities such as developing a team poster or creating a team cheer are two such team-building activities. For the students, this "Learning Together" phase entails concentrating on their specific roles within their group while at the same time, mastering the academic material. Once the teams feel comfortable with their roles and with each other the groups can move onto the third and final phase. This last phase focuses solely on learning valuable social skills.

According to Kagan, teaching social skills is fairly uncomplicated (Kagan, 1994). The teacher teaches a short social skill lesson first, and then moves on to teaching the academic content of the lesson. In their teams, the students practice the social skill while at the same time complete the academic task. Kagan suggests having one student on the team keep track of how well his/her team members are executing the targeted social skill by encouraging and reminding them of it throughout the duration of the lesson. Examples of social skills that can be taught are quiet voice usage, taking turns, sharing, raising hands, and not wandering from the group.

Spencer Kagan is one of many researchers who offers educators a way in which to implement cooperative learning strategies inside the classroom. Although their approaches may differ, their message is the same. Cooperative learning is an important and useful teaching tool

with which teachers can positively affect the academic and social lives of their students. Kagan, along with the other leading researchers, continue to spread the word to educators who have yet to see and experience the benefits of cooperative learning.

Those educators who understand the wholeness of cooperative learning research can't ignore the implications the studies continue to reveal. Today's students are not as socially or emotionally equipped as they were years ago. Many students rely on school for a sense of self-worth and recognition because support and encouragement from home is nonexistent. Cooperative learning provides children with a comfortable and supportive environment in which to learn. Such an environment may help children fill an unfulfilling void that their home lives leave. In fact, studies have shown that home neglect and abuse can be over-ridden when students are satisfied in school (Glasser, 1969). Gaining confidence and self-worth from a school environment will only foster positive feelings about education, thus making school life more meaningful and important.

Today's classrooms continue to reflect the vast diversity found across the United States. Therefore, within the school systems, use of cooperative learning is a research strategy that contributes to academic success and social acceptance. The cooperative learning structure stresses unity and team building skills. Children are instilled with the skills of learning individually, teaching others, and working together. Through cooperative learning, schools can prepare today's children with new attitudes and skills that will help them be productive and contributing workers in the future.

## Project Objectives and Processes

As a result of increased emphasis on cooperative learning strategies during the period of September 2001 to November 2001, the targeted classrooms will work cooperatively thereby

increasing student achievement, as measured by teacher-made surveys, observations, tests, and checklists.

In order to accomplish the terminal objective, the following processes are necessary:

1. The instructor will select and develop a series of learning activities that address development of social skills.
2. Students will participate in a series of learning activities that address cooperative learning strategies.
3. Classroom instruction will deliver curricular units reflecting cooperative learning and social skills.

Project Action Plan

I. September

A. Send home parent letter/permission slips (Appendix A)

B. Distribute Teacher Surveys (Appendix B)

C. Off-Task Checklist (Appendix C)

D. Pre-test Student Survey (Appendix D)

E. People Hunt Activity (Appendix E)

F. Organize Base Groups

G. On-task Behavior Observation (Appendix F)

H. Teacher Observation Journal (Appendix G)

II. October

A. Introduce various cooperative learning strategies (Appendix H)

B. Self Evaluation (Appendix I)

C. Teacher Observation Journal (Appendix G) and On-task Behavior Observation (Appendix F)

D. Conflict Resolution Strategies (Appendix H)

E. Begin KWL (Appendix J)

III. November

A. Post Student Survey (Appendix D)

B. Complete KWL (Appendix J)

C. Teacher Observation Journals (Appendix G)

D. Off-Task Checklist (Appendix C)

E. On-Task Checklist (Appendix F)

## Methods of Assessment

In order to assess the affects of the intervention, tests covering the content and the skills identified for the academic unit will be developed. A baseline assessment will be given prior to the academic unit in the format of a KWL graphic organizer. This assessment will then be given at the end of the unit. Teachers will create classrooms that foster cooperative learning environments. These classrooms will include visual aids such as bulletin boards and posters. Room arrangements will also be considered in order to enhance cooperative learning activities.

Students will also be asked to do a follow-up survey after the intervention. This survey will be similar to the pre-intervention survey. Students will be asked to respond to questions about their attitudes toward group and individual learning. Throughout the course of this study students will participate in various social skill building activities and cooperative learning strategies. A teacher-made checklist will be kept throughout the duration of the study. This

checklist will reflect off-task behavior as well as positive group behavior during these cooperative activities. In addition, students will be asked to evaluate themselves and their teams.

# CHAPTER 4

# PROJECT RESULTS

## Historical Description of the Intervention

The objective of this project was to increase the use of appropriate social skills and improve academic achievement. Cooperative learning strategies were utilized and specific social skill lessons were implemented in order to meet the desired objective.

Prior to the onset of the social skills lessons, a student survey was administered (Appendix D). The survey was given to the students' at all four sites. The purpose of the survey was to question the students about their feelings towards their peers and towards group work. The data was compiled and converted into a graph. Also prior to the intervention, the researchers began observing and recording their students' off-task behaviors. Behaviors that were considered off-task were wandering from the assigned group, interrupting others, using put-downs, not participating, not using appropriate voice levels, and touching others. The researchers used this off-task behavior checklist at various times throughout the school day. The checklist was kept throughout the twelve-week research period. The checklist and the survey were both used to show problem evidence.

In order to evaluate and comment on student behaviors and academic improvement, the researchers kept journals during the course of the intervention. Written observations were made on a weekly basis. These observations were used to show problem evidence and evaluate progress made throughout the research period.

During the second week of the twelve-week research period, base groups were formed. These base groups consisted of children with varied personalities and ability levels. The base groups were unchanged throughout the course of the remaining ten weeks of intervention. All cooperative activities and social skills lessons during this research period would be taught while students were in their base groups. The researchers referred to these base groups as "teams" and the students did so as well. In order to promote teamwork, activities were implemented which familiarized team members with one another and built acceptance and trust.

After the formation of the teams, each researcher was encouraged to reward appropriate team behavior. Certificates of positive teamwork were given to the teams that displayed appropriate behavior choices and met the academic objectives. The team rewards were used throughout the entire intervention period in order to bond teams and emphasize the importance of teamwork.

The original research plan was to teach a unit of study while incorporating cooperative strategies and specific social skill lessons. The researchers hoped that by implementing these cooperative strategies and social skill lessons, positive social skills would be learned and used by the students, and that the children would retain more information about the content than they would if working alone. In order to promote more positive social skills, a social skill lesson was taught at the beginning of each mini-lesson related to the theme. However, to get the students acclimated to cooperative strategies, the first three lessons focused entirely on team building strategies. For example, during lesson one, each base group was asked to create a team name and a poster. Lesson two called for each team to invent a "celebration," or a quiet body motion to be used whenever the team had done something well. Finally, for lesson three each team chose a member to interview and then introduce to the class. These chosen members were referred to as the "Star Team Members." The objectives for lessons one through three were to bond team members and introduce students to cooperative work.

Lessons four through ten continued to incorporate cooperative strategies, but also included an activity that related to the unit of study. For example, lesson four called for each

team member to say two positive things about another member in their group. Then the teams had to complete the K-W sections of a K-W-L chart together (Appendix L). At Site C, the children were studying spiders. During lesson four (Appendix H) the students first had to say complimentary things about their team members in order to create a positive, enjoyable learning environment. Then, the children turned their attention towards spiders and proceeded to think of things they knew about spiders and things that they wanted to know about spiders.

Lessons five through ten continued the same way; a social skill strategy was implemented in order to enhance the learning atmosphere, and then a content lesson from a particular unit of study was completed. By lesson ten the following social skills had been taught and reinforced: giving compliments, staying with the group, taking turns talking, using quiet voices, participating, and resolving conflicts. Furthermore, in order to measure the retention of information about the specific unit of study, the 'L' section of the K-W-L chart was completed at the end of the ten-week social lessons.

## Presentation and Analysis of Results

In order to analyze the effectiveness of this intervention, students were carefully administered pre-intervention and post-intervention student surveys on their thoughts concerning teaching styles, social interaction within the classroom, and their attitudes about children with diverse backgrounds. The survey was given in written form. Each researcher read and clarified the survey questions for the students. The students responded by filling in a smiling face, a neutral face, or a frowning face. The smiling face indicated an agree response, the neutral face indicated a neutral response and the frowning face indicated a disagree response. The results are reflected in Table 4 on page 45.

Table 4
Student Cooperative Post-Survey Results, December 2001
Targeted Social Preference/Learning Style

| N=98 | Agree | | Neutral | | Disagree | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Before | After | Before | After | Before | After |
| 1) It's okay to play with kids who are different from self: | 88 | 86 | 8 | 11 | 12 | 3 |
| 2) Can learn from peers: | 64 | 74 | 24 | 16 | 11 | 10 |
| 3) It is hard to work with kids not liked: | 36 | 45 | 38 | 28 | 25 | 28 |
| 4) Do not like working in teacher chosen groups: | 32 | 37 | 20 | 36 | 47 | 28 |
| 5) Want to be with friends in groups: | 81 | 82 | 14 | 14 | 4 | 4 |
| 6) Groups are a waste of time: | 36 | 23 | 15 | 17 | 48 | 60 |
| 7) Learn better from teacher: | 65 | 51 | 24 | 23 | 10 | 24 |
| 8) Groups can be fun: | 83 | 85 | 11 | 7 | 5 | 8 |
| 9) Groups make me think more: | 61 | 57 | 20 | 19 | 18 | 24 |
| 10) Want to work more with groups: | 63 | 73 | 25 | 14 | 11 | 13 |
| 11) Groups make me feel good: | 71 | 72 | 23 | 12 | 5 | 15 |
| 12) Mind wanders when the teacher talks: | 25 | 9 | 23 | 25 | 5 | 66 |
| 13) Enjoy the material more when with a group: | 54 | 60 | 31 | 20 | 13 | 19 |
| 14) Work is easier with peers: | 58 | 64 | 26 | 15 | 15 | 21 |
| 15) I help peers with my strengths: | 88 | 80 | 9 | 16 | 2 | 4 |
| 16) I learn to work with different kids: | 68 | 60 | 27 | 25 | 4 | 15 |
| 17) Groups help me learn the material better: | 63 | 62 | 26 | 17 | 29 | 21 |
| 18) I become a better group member: | 75 | 64 | 18 | 18 | 6 | 18 |
| 19) Want to become better friends with classmates: | 91 | 75 | 6 | 15 | 1 | 10 |

Unfortunately, early in the study the researchers found the student survey (Appendix D) questions to be confusing and used double negatives. Researchers chose to consider the results from only a few questions due to the difficulties with the survey.

As seen in Table 4 on page 45, the student post-survey results revealed that the targeted students had less trouble working with teacher selected groups as in question number four. Although the before and after percentages in the *favorable category* only fluctuated from 32% to 37%, the *neutral category* changed from 20% to 36%. Clearly, the *undesirable category* transformed from 47% to a much smaller 28%. The researchers concluded that through the specific cooperative learning techniques, the targeted students made a clear statement that working along side non-friends in teacher selected groups no longer presented such a difficulty in the classroom. The development of more positive interpersonal skills had begun, as illustrated in Figures 1 and 2.

Figure 1

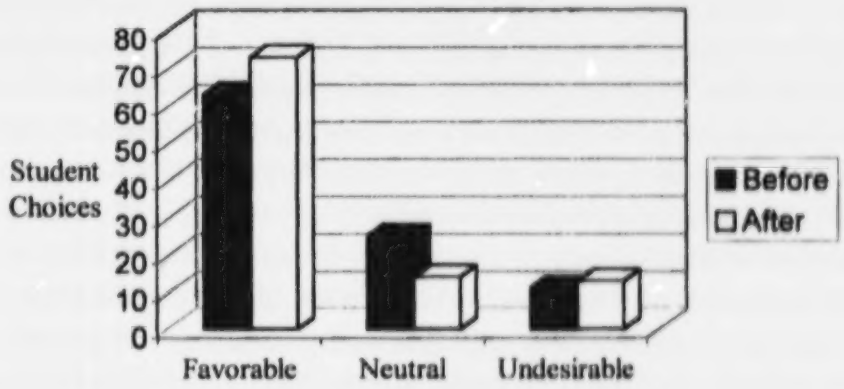



Figure 1. Student responses from question #10 of the student surveys from September 2001 and December 2001. "I would like to work more with groups."

Figure 2

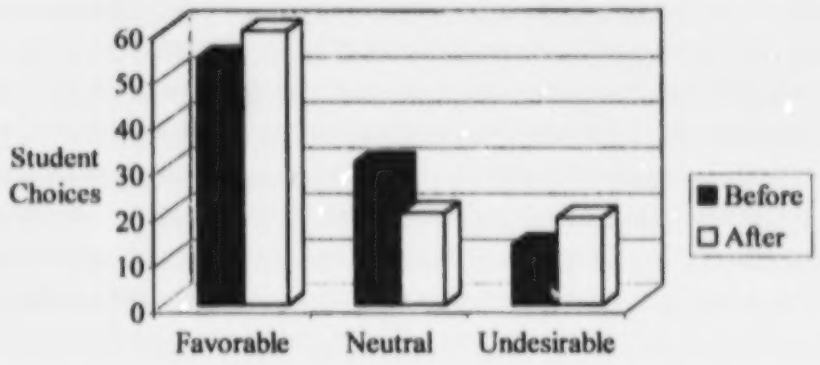



Figure 2. Student responses from question #13 of the student surveys from September 2001 and December 2001. "I enjoy the material more when I work with other students."

Teacher Observations/Checklists

During the twelve weeks of the intervention, the researchers were taking careful documentation of the off-task behaviors within the classroom. Each researcher was keeping specific data on six categories of common off-task or socially inappropriate responses to others. These categories included wandering from the group, interrupting others, putting others down, not participating within the group, not using an appropriate voice level, and touching others. Each researcher was instructed to place a tally mark in each category to correspond to an off-task behavior-taking place in the classroom. Data was documented during two sessions each week, giving the researchers a total of 24 documented sessions. Figure 3 on page 48 illustrates the part of this intervention.

Figure 3

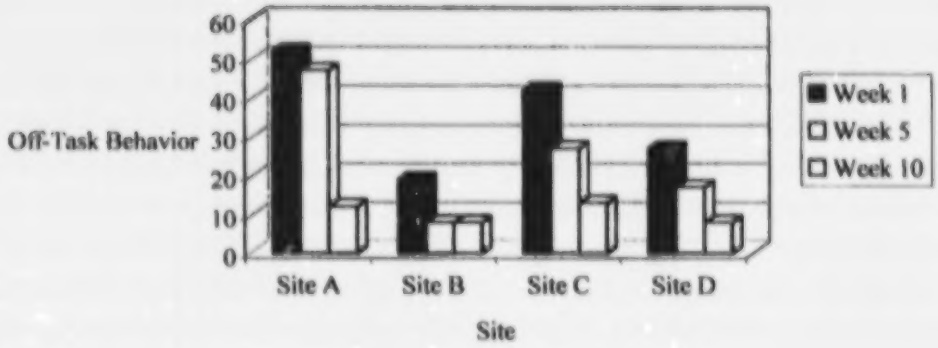



Figure 3. Off-task behavior teacher checklist from week one, week five, and week ten.

## Teacher Journals/Student Work

Through the teacher observations and journal entries, along with reading the work of the students, the researchers noted that the social skill lessons were having a positive effect on the classroom environment. At Site A, comments on the Self-Evaluation (Appendix I) included, "We need to be all together and help more too," "I can listen more and help more too," and "I can be more helpful to my team" in response to the question "What can I do to help my group better?" The teacher noted in the journal and on the checklist, the week after filling out the self-reflection only two students did not participate in the next group task. This was the lowest number of non-participating students up until that point. At the end of the unit, the students also noted that they recognized a change in their behavior. While finishing the KWL chart, some students wrote about the content area that was studied, while other students added comments about group work. "I learned to be a good listener," "I learned to talk when it is my turn," "I learned to respect others, "and "I learned to take turns" were written comments from the final evaluations at Site A.

## Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the presentation and analysis of the data on the students' surveys and teacher observations, and strengthened with the records from teacher journals and student work, the targeted sites exhibited marked improvement in their use of appropriate social skills. The number of off-task behaviors decreased as recorded on the teacher observation checklists. Major behavior problems subsided as witnessed from the weekly journal logs. Through specific cooperative instruction, more positive student social interactions were taking place. Additionally, a more positive working atmosphere was developing in the classrooms at all sites. Cooperative activities and social skill lessons surely contributed to the overall success of this intervention.

The researchers agree that many of the interventions could be implemented into all classrooms. All interventions require effective modeling from the teacher and consistent reinforcement for successful implementation. Some of the cooperative lessons may have to be modified for the early elementary levels.

The researchers believe some recommendations should be addressed. First, the student survey gave many inconsistent results due to the format of the questions. Many of the questions may have been misleading to the students. For example, "I do not like it when the teacher chooses groups for me" could have been answered with a smiling face, or "Yes, I do not like it when the teacher chooses my group for me." But the researchers believe many students answered with a frowning face, "Yes, the teacher choosing my groups for me makes me feel bad." The researchers also believe the survey gave inconsistent results because at the start of the year, many students could not read and the teacher read and explained the survey to them. This helped the students interpret the questions. However, when the survey was re-administered in December, the students were better readers. Many of them read ahead and finished the survey before the question was explained. This may have lead to misinterpretation of the questions.

A second recommendation that needs to be addressed is classroom management. While maintaining the management of an effective classroom, it is often difficult to take the time to accurately record off-task behaviors. This needs to be considered when looking at data

collection. The researchers suggest that in the future, a video- tape might be used to record the class, and the researcher looks for off-task behaviors by reviewing the video. Finally, if planning to use the interventions with young children, some of the cooperative learning activities need to be modified.

The goal of this research project was to create a more unified classroom in which heterogeneous groups assisted each other to become better friends and learners. Specific interventions were implemented at each site in order to achieve this goal. All classroom teachers who desire to decrease off-task behaviors and improve academic achievement could implement this plan. Further research would be necessary in order to follow the progress or regression of these social skills. Hopefully, appropriate social skills will continue to develop along with the child's academic growth.

The researchers felt as a result of these interventions, students were given the opportunity to make positive behavior choices while working together to achieve academic success. Due to the intervention, the researchers believe that the students are now able to work better with other students, thus enabling them to respect and value diversity in others and learn from others.

## REFERENCES

Bellanca, James & Fogarty, Robin. (1991). Blueprints for Thinking In The CooperativeClassroom. Arlington Heights, IL: SkyLight Training & Publishing.

Brandt, R. (1987). On Cooperation in Schools: A Conversation with David and Roger Johnson. Educational Leadership Nov, 14-19.

Costa, Arthur, Bellanca, James & Fogarty, Robin. (1992). If Minds Matter Volume II. Arlington Heights, IL: SkyLight Training & Publishing.

Curran, Lorna (1990 ). Cooperative Learning Lesson for Little Ones. San Juan Capistrano, CA: Resources for Teacher Inc.

Dotson, Jeanie M. (2001). Cooperative Learning Structures Can Increase Student Achievement. Kagan Online Magazine.

Exon, Rose & Wyatt, Debbie. (1994). Resource Notes: Cooperative Learning. Torrance, CA: Frank Schaffer Publishing.

Glasser, William, M.D. (2000). Creating the Competence Classroom. Chatsworth: CA. The William Glasser Institute.

Glasser, William, M.D. (1998). Choice Theory in the Classroom. New York: Harpercollins.

Glasser, W. (1997). A New Look At School Failure and School Success. Phi Delta Kappan, 78 (8).

Glasser, William, M.D. (1969). School Without Failure. New York: Harper & Row.

Glasser, William, M.D. (1998). The Quality School. New York: Harper Perennial.

Glasser, William, M.D. (1998). The Quality School Teacher. New York: Harper Perennial.

Glasser, W. (1992). The Quality School Curriculum. Phi Delta Kappan, 73 (9).

Gordan, Alice Kaplan. (1972). Games for Growth. Chicago, IL: Science Research Associates, Inc.

Johnson, David W., Johnson, Roger T. & Holubec, Edyth Johnson. (1998). Cooperation in the Classroom. Edina, MN: Interaction Book Company.

Johnson, Roger & Holubec, Edythe. (1994). The New Circles of Learning Cooperation in the Classroom and School. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Kagan, Spencer, Dr. (1994). Cooperative Learning. Sam Clemente, CA: Resources for Teachers Inc.

Kagan, Spencer, Dr. (1985). Cooperative Learning Resources for Teachers. San Juan Capistrano, CA: Resources for Teachers.

Kagan, Spencer, Dr. (2001). Kagan Structures: Research and Rationale. Kagan Online Magazine.

Kagan, Spence, Dr. (1989-1990). The Structural Approach To Cooperative Learning. Educational Leadership, Dec-Jan, 12-15.

Kagan, Spencer, Dr. (1995). We can talk: Cooperative Learning in the Elementary ESL Classroom (Report No. 93002010). Washington DC: ERIC Clearinghouse on Languages and Linguistics. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 382085).

Kaplan, Phyllis & Stauffer, Sandra. (1994). Cooperative Learning in Music. Reston, VA: MENC.

Gough, Pauline B. (1987). An Introduction to Cooperative Learning. The Keys To Improving Schools: An Interview With William Glasser. Phi Delta Kappan.

Lezotte, Lawrence, W. (1997). Learning For All. Okemos, Michigan: Effective School Products, Ltd.

Purkey, William, Watson. (1984). Inviting School Success. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing Company.

Slavin, Robert, E. (1994). A Practical Guide to Cooperative Learning. Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Slavin, R. (1996). Cooperative Learning In Middle And Secondary School. Clearing House, 69, 200-204.

Slavin, R. (1987). Cooperative Learning and the Cooperative School. Educational Leadership. Nov, 7-13.

Zemelman, Steven, Daniels, Harvey & Hyde, Arthur. (1993). Best Practice New Standards for Teaching and Learning in America's Schools. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

# APPENDIX A

## PARENT LETTER/PERMISSION SLIP

**Consent to Participate in a Research Study**
**Positive Aspects of Cooperative Learning**

September 2001

Dear Parent or Guardian,

I am currently enrolled in a master's degree program at Saint Xavier University. This program requires me to design and implement a program on an issue that directly affects my instruction. I have chosen to examine cooperative learning. The purpose of this project is to increase achievement and build positive social skills.

I will conduct my project from September through November. The activities related to the project will take place during regular instructional delivery. No names will be used; all information will be kept confidential. The report will be used to share what I have learned as a result of this project with other professionals in the field of education.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may choose to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose not to participate, information gathered about your student will not be included in the report.

If you have any questions or would like further information about my project, please contact me. Please sign the statement below and return it to me if you agree to have your child participate in this study.

Sincerely,

++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++++

I,_____, the parent/legal guardian of the student named below, acknowledge that the researcher has explained to me the purpose of this research, identified any risks involved, and offered to answer any questions I may have about the nature of my child's participation. I freely and voluntarily consent to my child's participation in this project. I understand all information gathered during this project will be completely confidential. I also understand that I may keep a copy of this consent form for my own information.

Name of Student:_____

Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian_____Date_____

# APPENDIX B

# TEACHER SURVEY

# Teacher Survey
# Teacher Perceptions of Cooperative Learning

**Directions:**

For each of the following statements, please circle the response on the answer sheet that best corresponds to your position, according to the response scale. Please be honest!

Thanks for your input and support.

1. ' Years of teaching completed:
   - A. 0 to 1 years
   - B. 2 to 5 years
   - C. 6 to 15 years
   - D. 16 to 24 years
   - E. 25 years or more

2. Teaching position (choose only one):
   - A. Classroom teacher, Kindergarten
   - B. Classroom teacher, grades 1 to 2
   - C. Classroom teacher, grades 3 to 6
   - D. Specialist (Music, Physical Education, Art, Library, etc.)

3. Your typical class size:
   - A. Less than 18 students
   - B. 18 to 24 students
   - C. 25 to 29 students
   - D. 30 to 34 students
   - E. More than 34 students

4. Ability composition of your class(es):
   - A. Mostly above average ability students
   - B. Mostly average ability students
   - C. Mostly below average ability students
   - D. Mixed (all ability levels)

5. Cooperative learning is appropriate for the grade level I teach.
   - a) Strongly Disagree
   - b) Disagree
   - c) Undecided
   - d) Agree
   - e) Strongly Agree

6. Amount of workshop training in cooperative learning that you have received:
   A. None
   B. Less than a full day
   C. Between 1 and 2 days
   D. Between 3 and 6 days
   E. More than 6 days

7. The amount of cooperative learning training I have received has prepared me to implement it successfully.
   a) Strongly Disagree
   b) Disagree
   c) Undecided
   d) Agree
   e) Strongly Agree

8. Cooperative learning is consistent with my teaching philosophy.
   a) Strongly Disagree
   b) Disagree
   c) Undecided
   d) Agree
   e) Strongly Agree

9. I understand cooperative learning well enough to implement it successfully.
   a) Strongly Disagree
   b) Disagree
   c) Undecided
   d) Agree
   e) Strongly Agree

10. Number of years you have been implementing cooperative learning
   A. None
   B. Less than 2 years
   C. Between 2 and 4 years
   D. Between 4 and 8 years
   E. More than 8 years

11. Implementing cooperative learning requires a great deal of effort.
   a) Strongly Disagree
   b) Disagree
   c) Undecided
   d) Agree
   e) Strongly Agree

12. Cooperative learning is a valuable instructional approach.
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

13. Using cooperative learning promotes friendship among students.
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

14. Using cooperative learning fosters positive student attitudes towards learning.
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

15. Cooperative learning is an efficient classroom strategy.
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

16. Using cooperative learning is likely to create too many disciplinary problems among my students.
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

17. Cooperative learning holds bright students back.
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

18. Cooperative learning gives too much responsibility to the students.
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

19. If I use cooperative learning, my class room is too noisy.
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

20. There is too little time available to prepare students to work effectively in groups.
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

21. My students presently lack the skills necessary for effective cooperative group work.
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

22. Too often in cooperative learning, individual students expect other group members to do the majority of the work.
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

23. It is impossible to evaluate individual students fairly when using cooperative learning.
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

24. Do you perceive group work as a time when many students turn to off-task behaviors?
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

25. Competition best prepares students for the real world.
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

26. Peer interaction helps students obtain a deeper understanding of the material.
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

27. I feel my students come to my class with appropriate social skills.
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

28. Do you feel the need to teach appropriate social skills in your classroom?
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

29. Engaging in cooperative learning enhances students' social skills.
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

30. Cooperative learning places too much emphasis on developing students' social skills.
    a) Strongly Disagree
    b) Disagree
    c) Undecided
    d) Agree
    e) Strongly Agree

# APPENDIX C

## OFF-TASK BEHAVIOR CHECKLIST

## Off-Task Behavior Checklist

| | Wanders from Group | Interupts Others | Put-downs | Doesn't Participate | Loud Voices | Touches Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Week 1 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |
| Week 2 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |
| Week 3 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |
| Week 4 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |
| Week 5 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |
| Week 6 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |
| Week 7 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |
| Week 8 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |
| Week 9 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |
| Week 10 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |
| Week 11 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |

## Off-Task Behavior Checklist

| | Wanders from Group | Interupts Others | Put-downs | Doesn't Participate | Loud Voices | Touches Others |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Week 12 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |
| Week 13 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |
| Week 14 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |
| Week 15 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |
| Week 16 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |
| Week 17 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |
| Week 18 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |
| Week 19 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |
| Week 20 a | | | | | | |
| b | | | | | | |

# APPENDIX D

# STUDENT SURVEY

Student Survey Date / /01

Listen to your teacher read the following sentences. Think about how the sentence makes you feel. Color in the face that shows how you feel about the sentence.

1. It is okay to play with children who are different from me.

2. I can learn things from kids my own age.

3. It is hard to work with kids I don't like.

4. I do not like when the teacher chooses group members.

5. When I work in a group, I want to be with my friends.

6. I feel like working in groups is a waste of time.

7. I learn better from the teacher, not with groups.

8. Working in a group can be fun.

9. Working in groups makes me think more.

10. I would like to work more with groups.

11. Working in a group makes me feel good.

12. When the teacher talks, I think about other things.

13. I enjoy the material more when I work with other students.

14. The work is easier for me to understand when I work with other students.

15. When I work in a group, I help my group members with what I am good at.

16. When I work in groups, I learn to work with students that are different from me.

17. When I work in a group, my group members help me learn the material.

18. The more I work in groups, the better group member I become.

19. I would like to become better friends with some of the kids in my class.

20. Circle the number of good friends you have in class.

0 – 2 3 – 5 6 – 7 8 – 10 more than 11

# APPENDIX E

## PEOPLE HUNT

Name_____

# PEOPLE SEARCH

Find someone who. . .

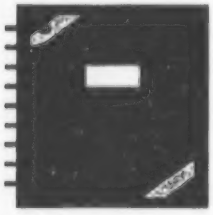
1. Can tell you about "Gotcha" Tickets.

_____

2. Can tell you how to line up at recess.

_____

3. Can tell you about the "tracker."



_____

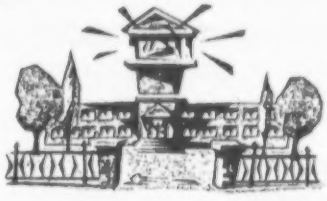
4. Can tell you about the "Clipboard."

_____

5. Can tell you how to act in the hallway.

_____

6. Went to school here last year.



_____

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# APPENDIX F

## ON-TASK BEHAVIOR OBSERVATION CHECKLIST

| SKILLS | I | II | III | IV | V | VI | VII | VIII | IX | X |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Quiet Voices | | | | | | | | | | |
| Praise | | | | | | | | | | |
| No put Downs | | | | | | | | | | |
| Check for understanding | | | | | | | | | | |
| Give 100% | | | | | | | | | | |
| Stay in group | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sharing/ encouraging | | | | | | | | | | |
| Listening/ courtesy | | | | | | | | | | |



BEST COPY AVAILABLE

# APPENDIX G

# TEACHER JOURNAL

Week of _____

Actions Taken:

action:

| PLUSES (+) | MINUSES (-) | INTERESTING (?) |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

Comments, Notes (Continued on back, as needed):

# APPENDIX H

# COOPERATIVE LEARNING LESSON PLANS

Appendix H

Cooperative Learning Lesson One

Week 1

Prior to class:

Teacher selects students for each cooperative team. Each team should contain four members. If the class does not divide evenly, then groups of three may be used.

Objective: Build teams, explain team roles, introduce team members.

Team Building Activity I: Create Team Names and Posters:

1) Give each group markers and paper.
2) The students need to pick a team name and draw a picture for their group. All members of the team must contribute to the poster.
3) Each member of the team will introduce him or herself.
4) The team will explain how they thought of their team name.

Process:

1) Divide students into groups.
2) Explain group roles of checker, coach, materials manager, and writer.
3) Give each group a bag with group role slips. Have students choose a job at random. Explain that each week their job may change.
4) Complete team posters.
5) Introduce teams.

Source: Spencer Kagan, Cooperative Learning 8:4

Cooperative Learning Lesson Two

Week 2

Objective: Build teams, explain group certificates, and desired behaviors.

Team Building Activity: Group Celebrations

1) Each team is responsible for making up a quiet body motion to use whenever the team does something well. Examples of this include, "high-five" or "thumbs-up."
2) Each team will share group celebration sign with the class.

Group Certificates/Checklists:

External rewards of group certificates will be given to teams who do a good job following skills on the checklist. Start Individual and Group Checklists.

Process:

1) Explain and discuss expected group behaviors.
   a) Students need to use quiet voices.
   b) Praise each other, no put-downs.
   c) Check to make sure each team member understands to give 100%.

d) Stay in the group.
e) Share and encourage.
f) Listen and be courteous.
g) Refer to poster or visual reminder in classroom.

2) Complete Team Building Activity.
3) Share celebrations with the class.

Source: Spencer, Kagan, Cooperative Learning 8:5.

## Cooperative Learning Lesson Three
Week 3

Objective: Build teams.

Team Building Activity: STAR Team Member Activity.
1) Each team picks one person to introduce.
2) The team discovers three hobbies, talents or traits about the member and introduces them to the class.

Process:
1) Complete team building activity.

## Cooperative Learning Lesson Four
Week 4

Content Objective: Complete K-W sections of the content area K-W-L.

Social Skill Objective: Each student will say two nice things to another person on their team.

Process:
1) Teams pick jobs randomly from the bag.
2) Subject for content area unit introduced Teams complete a K-W-L minus the "L" for the subject.
3) Wrap up with the STAR Team Member Activity.

## Cooperative Learning Lesson Five
Week 5

Content Objective: Students will complete an activity in the content area of study.

Social Skill Objective: Reduce Wandering.
Each student is given a "wandering ticket". The goal is to still have the ticket at the end of the class. If a child gets up and moves without permission, their "wandering ticket" is taken. Group points and certificates will be awarded to teams whose members still have their tickets at the end of the class.

Process:
1) Explain wandering tickets.
2) Complete content area activity.
3) Wrap-up with STAR Team Member Activity.

## Cooperative Learning Lesson Six
Week 6

Objective: Students will complete an activity in content area.

Social Skill Objective: Talking Chips to help teach taking turns talking.
1) Each child is given five chips.
2) Each time the student wants to talk to the team, he or she must put a chip into the pile.
3) After a child uses all his or her chips, or takes all the allotted turns, he or she must wait until all the other team members have used their chips before speaking again.
4) When all team members have used all of their chips, the chips are again divided and turns are taken again.

Process:
1) Explain Talking Chips activity.
2) Complete content area activity.
3) Complete STAR member activity.

Source: Kagan, Spencer Cooperative Learning 13:1

## Cooperative Learning Lesson Seven
Week 7

Objective: Complete activity in content area.

Social Skill Objective: Quiet Voices.

1) Have students stand in two lines, facing each other. One line is on one side of the room, the other on the opposite side. Instruct the group to try to talk to each other across the room. After a short time, tell them that talking this loudly uses a "ten-foot voice."
2) Have the students take five steps closer to the center. Repeat talking. This uses a "five-foot voice."
3) Have the students take two steps closer. Repeat talking. This is a "three-foot voice."
4) Have the students take another step closer. Talk using "one-foot voices." This is the level they should use while in teams.
5) Have the students stand even closer to practice using whisper voices.

Process:

1) Review prior social skills.
2) Complete quiet voices activity.
3) Complete lesson in content area.

Source: Kagan, Spencer Cooperative Learning 14:23

## Cooperative Learning Lesson Eight
Week 8

Objective: Students will complete a lesson in content area.

Social Skill Objective: Students will complete self-reflections about team participation.

Process:

1) Review social skills.
2) Complete an activity in content area unit.
3) Students complete a self-reflection on individual participation within the team.

Cooperative Learning Lesson Nine
Week 9

Objective: Complete content area lesson.

Social Skill Objective: Introduce STOP- HACC plan for conflict-resolution.

1) If a group has a problem , the students should follow these steps:
   **S** Share the problem.
   **T**ake turns talking about the problem.
   **O**utside help.
   **P**ostpone solving the problem if necessary.

2) They can also use:
   **H**umor.
   **A**void getting angry.
   **C**ompromise the issue.
   **C**hance the answer or solution.

Process:

1) Review all social skills.
2) Explain STOP-HACC method of conflict resolution.
3) Groups are instructed to use a visual reminder if this strategy of they have a problem in the group activity.
4) Complete content area lesson.

Source: Kagan, Spencer Cooperative Learning 14:29

Cooperative Learning Lesson Ten
Week 10

Objective: Complete L section of the original KWL chart.

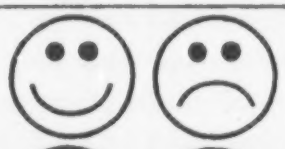
Process:

1) Review all social skills: saying nice things, no wandering, taking turns talking, quiet voices, good participation, STOP/HACC plan.
2) Students complete the original KWL from the beginning of the content unit.

# APPPENDIX I

## STUDENT SELF-EVALUATION

# How Helpful Was I?



1. When I knew an answer or had an idea, I shared it.

2. I encouraged others in my group.

3. I used names.

4. I felt encouraged by people in my group.

5. When my answer was not the same as my partner's, I tried to find out why.

6. When I did not understand something, I asked my partner.

7. When my partner did not understand, I helped him/her.

## Goal Setting

What can you do to make your group better?

# APPENDIX J

## KWL

## What I Know



## What I Want to Know

## What I Learned

**U.S. Department of Education**
*Office of Educational Research and Improvement (OERI)*
*National Library of Education (NLE)*
*Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC)*

ERIC

# REPRODUCTION RELEASE

(Specific Document)

## I. DOCUMENT IDENTIFICATION:

Title: Improving Students' Social Skills and Achievement Through Cooperative Learning

Author(s): Caparos, Jennifer, Cetera, Colleen, Ogden, Lynn, Rossett, Kathryn

Corporate Source: Saint Xavier University

Publication Date: ASAP

## II. REPRODUCTION RELEASE:

In order to disseminate as widely as possible timely and significant materials of interest to the educational community, documents announced in the monthly abstract journal of the ERIC system, *Resources in Education* (RIE), are usually made available to users in microfiche, reproduced paper copy, and electronic media, and sold through the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). Credit is given to the source of each document, and, if reproduction release is granted, one of the following notices is affixed to the document.

If permission is granted to reproduce and disseminate the identified document, please CHECK ONE of the following three options and sign at the bottom of the page.

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 1 documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

1

Level 1

X

Check here for Level 1 release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche or other ERIC archival media (e.g., electronic) and paper copy

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2A documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE, AND IN ELECTRONIC MEDIA FOR ERIC COLLECTION SUBSCRIBERS ONLY, HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2A

Level 2A

Check here for Level 2A release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche and in electronic media for ERIC archival collection subscribers only

The sample sticker shown below will be affixed to all Level 2B documents

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL IN MICROFICHE ONLY HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Sample

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

2B

Level 2B

Check here for Level 2B release, permitting reproduction and dissemination in microfiche only

Documents will be processed as indicated provided reproduction quality permits.
If permission to reproduce is granted, but no box is checked, documents will be processed at Level 1.

*I hereby grant to the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) nonexclusive permission to reproduce and disseminate this document as indicated above. Reproduction from the ERIC microfiche or electronic media by persons other than ERIC employees and its system contractors requires permission from the copyright holder. Exception is made for non-profit reproduction by libraries and other service agencies to satisfy information needs of educators in response to discrete inquiries.*

Sign here, please

Signature: Colleen Cetera, Jennifer Caparos, Lynn Ogden, Kathryn Rossett

Printed Name/Position/Title: Student/FBMP

Organization/Address: Saint Xavier University, 3700 W. 103rd St. Chgo, IL

Telephone: 708-802-6219 FAX: 708-802-6208

E-Mail Address: crannell@sxu.edu Date: 4-17-02

William Crannell, Ed.D.

(over)

## III. DOCUMENT AVAILABILITY INFORMATION (FROM NON-ERIC SOURCE):

If permission to reproduce is not granted to ERIC, *or*, if you wish ERIC to cite the availability of the document from another source, please provide the following information regarding the availability of the document. (ERIC will not announce a document unless it is publicly available, and a dependable source can be specified. Contributors should also be aware that ERIC selection criteria are significantly more stringent for documents that cannot be made available through EDRS.)

| |
|---|
| Publisher/Distributor: |
| Address: |
| Price: |

## IV. REFERRAL OF ERIC TO COPYRIGHT/REPRODUCTION RIGHTS HOLDER:

If the right to grant this reproduction release is held by someone other than the addressee, please provide the appropriate name and address:

| |
|---|
| Name: |
| Address: |

## V. WHERE TO SEND THIS FORM:

Send this form to the following ERIC Clearinghouse:

ERIC/REC
2805 E. Tenth Street
Smith Research Center, 150
Indiana University
Bloomington, IN 47408

However, if solicited by the ERIC Facility, or if making an unsolicited contribution to ERIC, return this form (and the document being contributed) to:

**ERIC Processing and Reference Facility**
**4483-A Forbes Boulevard**
**Lanham, Maryland 20706**
**Telephone:** 301-552-4200
**Toll Free:** 800-799-3742
**FAX:** 301-552-4700
**email:** info@ericfac.piccard.csc.com
**WWW:** http://ericfacility.org